NUMB. CCCCIX.

The SPECTATOR.

——Muſæo contingere cuncta lepore Lucr.

Thurſday, June 19. 1712.

HORATIAN very often recommends the fine Taſte, as the utmoſt Perfection of an accompliſhed Man. As this Word ariſes very often in Converſation, I ſhall endeavour to give ſome Account of it, and to lay down Rules how we may know whether we are Maſters of it, and how we may acquire that fine Talent of Writing, which is ſo much talked of among the Polite World.

All Languages make uſe of this Metaphor, to expreſs that Faculty of the Mind, which diſtinguiſhes the moſt concealed Faults and niceſt Perfections in Writing. We may be ſure this Metaphor would not have been ſo general in all Tongues, had there not been a very great Conformity between that Mental Power which is the Subject of this Paper, and that Faculty of Taſte which gives us a Reliſh of every diſagreeable Flavour that affects the Palate. Accordingly we find, that there are as many Degrees of Reliſh in the intellectual Faculty, as in the Senſe, both marked out by this common Denomination. We ſay a Perſon who poſſeſſed the one in ſo high a Perfection, that after having taſted ten different Kinds of Tea, he would diſtinguiſh, without ſeeing the Colour of it, the particular Sort which was offered him; and not only ſo, but any two Sorts of them that were mixt together in an even Proportion; nay, he has carried the Experiment ſo far, as upon taſting the Compoſition of three different ſorts, to name the Parcels from which the three ſeveral Ingredients were taken. In the ſame manner a fine Taſte in Writing will diſcern, at the firſt Reading, not only the general Beauties and Imperfections of an Author, but diſcover even his particular Ways of thinking and expreſſing himſelf, which diverſify him from all other Authors, as well as the ſeveral Foreign Infuſions of Thought and Style, and the particular Authors from whom they are borrowed.

Having thus far explained what is generally underſtood by a fine Taſte in Writing, and ſhown the Propriety of the Metaphor which is uſed on this Occaſion, I ſhall define it to be *that Faculty of the Soul, which diſcerns the Beauties of an Author with Pleaſure, and his Imperfections with Diſlike.* If a Man would know whether he is poſſeſſed of this Faculty, let him read over the celebrated Works of Antiquity, which have ſtood the Teſt of different Ages and Countries; or thoſe Pieces of the Moderns, which have the Sanction of the Politer Part of our Contemporaries. If upon the Peruſal of ſuch Writings he does not find himſelf delighted in an extraordinary manner, or, if upon reading the admired Paſſages in ſuch Authors, he finds a Coldneſs and Indifference in his Thoughts, he ought to conclude, not (as is too uſual among taſteleſs Readers) that the Author has not thoſe Perfections which have been admired in him, but that he himſelf wants the Faculty of diſcovering them.

He ſhould, in the ſecond place, be very careful to obſerve, whether he taſtes the diſtinguiſhing Perfections, or, if I may be allowed to call them ſo, the Specifick Qualities of the Author whom he peruſes; whether he is particularly pleaſed with *Livy* for his manner of telling a Story, with *Salluſt* for his entering into thoſe internal Principles of Action which ariſe from the Characters and Manners of the Perſons he deſcribes, or with *Tacitus* for his diſplaying thoſe outward Motives of Safety and Intereſt, which give birth to the whole Series of Tranſactions which he relates.

He may likewiſe conſider, how differently he is affected by the ſame Thought, which preſents it ſelf in a great Writer, from what he is when he finds it delivered by a Perſon of an ordinary Genius. For there is as much difference in apprehending a Thought cloathed in *Cicero*'s Language, and that of a common Author, as in ſeeing an Object by the Light of a Taper, or by the Light of the Sun.

It is very difficult to lay down Rules for the acquirement of ſuch a Taſte as that I am here ſpeaking of. The Faculty muſt in ſome degree be born with us, and it very often happens, that thoſe who have other Qualities in Perfection are wholly void of this. One of the moſt eminent Mathematicians of the Age has aſſured me, that the greateſt Pleaſure he took in reading *Virgil*, was in examining *Æneas* his Voyage by the Map; as I queſtion not but many a Modern Compiler of Hiſtory would be delighted with little more in that Divine Author, than in the bare matters of Fact.

But notwithſtanding this Faculty muſt in ſome meaſure be born with us, there are ſeveral Methods for Cultivating and Improving it, and without which it will be very uncertain, and of little uſe to the Perſon that poſſeſſes it. The moſt natural Method for this Purpoſe is to be converſant among the Writings of the moſt Polite Authors. A Man who has any Reliſh for fine Writing, either diſcovers new Beauties, or receives ſtronger Impreſſions from the Maſterly Strokes of a great Author every time he peruſes him: Beſides that he naturally

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wears himself into the same manner of Speaking and Thinking.

Conversation with Men of a Polite Genius is another Method for improving our Natural Taste. It is impossible for a Man of the greatest Parts to consider any thing in its whole Extent, and in all its variety of Lights. Every Man, besides those general Observations which are to be made upon an Author, forms several Reflections that are peculiar to his own manner of Thinking; so that Conversation will naturally furnish us with Hints which we did not attend to, and make us enjoy other Mens Parts and Reflections as well as our own. This is the best Reason I can give for the Observation which several have made, that Men of great Genius in the same way of Writing seldom rise up singly, but at certain Periods of Time appear together, and in a Body; as they did at *Rome* in the Reign of *Augustus*, and in *Greece* about the Age of *Socrates*. I cannot think that either *Corneille*, *Racine*, *Moliere*, *Boileau*, *la Fontaine*, *Bruyere*, *Bossu*, or the *Daciers*, would have written so well as they have done, had they not been Friends and Contemporaries.

It is likewise necessary for a Man who would form to himself a finished Taste of good Writing, to be well versed in the Works of the best *Criticks* both Ancient and Modern. I must confess that I could wish there were Authors of this kind, who, beside the Mechanical Rules which a Man of very little Taste may discourse upon, would enter into the very Spirit and Soul of fine Writing, and shew us the several Sources of that Pleasure which rises in the Mind upon the Perusal of a noble Work. Thus altho' in Poetry it be absolutely necessary that the Unities of Time, Place and Action, with other Points of the same Nature should be thoroughly explained and understood; there is still something more essential to the Art, something that elevates and astonishes the Fancy, and gives a Greatness of Mind to the Reader, which few of the Criticks besides *Longinus* have consider'd.

Our general Taste in *England* is for Epigram, turns of Wit, and forced Conceits, which have no manner of influence, either for the bettering or enlarging the Mind of him who reads them, and have been carefully avoided by the greatest Writers, both among the Ancients and Moderns. I have endeavoured in several of my Speculations to banish this *Gothic* Taste which has taken Possession among us. I entertained the Town for a Week together with an Essay upon Wit, in which I endeavoured to detect several of those false kinds which have been admir'd in the different Ages of the World; and at the same time to shew wherein the nature of true Wit consists. I afterwards gave an Instance of the great force which lies in a natural Simplicity of Thought to affect the Mind of the Reader, from such Vulgar Pieces as have little else besides this single Qualification to recommend them. I have likewise examined the Works of the greatest Poet which our Nation or perhaps any other has produced, and particularized most of those rational and manly Beauties which give a value to that Divine Work. I shall next *Saturday* enter upon an Essay *on the Pleasures of the Imagination*, which though it shall consider that Subject at large, will perhaps suggest to the Reader what it is that gives a Beauty to many Passages of the finest Writers both in Prose and Verse. As an Undertaking of this nature is entirely new, I question not but it will be receiv'd with Candour.

At the Desire of several Ladies of Quality.
For the Benefit of Mr. Bickerstaff and Mr. Newman.

By Her Majesty's Company of Comedians,

AT the Theatre Royal in Drury-Lane, this present Thursday, being the 19th Day of June, will be presented a Play called, The Indian Emperour; Or, the Conquest of Mexico by the Spaniards. The Part of Cortez by Mr. Powell, Cydaria by Mrs. Seymour, Montezuma by Mr. Keene, Odmar by Mr. Mills, Guyomar by Mr. Booth, Orbellan by Mr. Bullock, Jun. Almeria by Mrs. Knight, Alibech by Mrs. Rogers. With several Entertainments of Dancing by Mr. Prince, Mrs. Bicknell, and others. To which will be added, A Farce of one Act only, called The Walking Statue: Or, the Devil in the Wine-Cellar. Being positively the last time of the Company's acting this Season. By Her Majesty's Command, no Persons are to be admitted behind the Scenes.

AT the Queen's Theatre in the Hay-Market, on Saturday next, being the 21st of June, will be presented an English Opera call'd Calypso and Telemachus. The Boxes 5 s. Pit 3 s. First Gallery 2 s. 6 d. Upper Gallery 1 s. 6 d. Boxes upon the Stage half a Guinea. To begin exactly at Seven. By Her Majesty's Command. No Persons are to be admitted behind the Scenes.

THE Famous Water-Theatre of the late Ingenious Mr. Winstanly is opened, where is shewn the greatest Curiosities in Water-Works the like was never seen in this Nation before, Shown for the Benefit of his Wife every Evening at 6 a Clock. There is several new Additions made, as Three new Sea-Gods and Goddesses, Nymphs, Mermaids and Satires all of them playing Water as Suitable, and Some of them Fire mingling with the Water. In the Barrel that plays so many Liquors is broken in Pieces before the Spectators. There is a new Sea Triumph, consisting three Figures all playing of Water, never shown before this Month, and other new Figures suitable to this Season. Boxes 2 s. 6 d. Pit 2 s. First Gallery 1 s. 6 d. Upper Gallery 6 d. It is at the lower end of Pickadilly and is known by the Wind-Mill on the Top of it.

Just Publish'd,

The Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity. In three Parts. Wherein All the Texts in the New Testament relating to the Doctrine, and the principal Passages in the Liturgy of the Church of England are collected, compared and explained. By Samuel Clarke D. D. Rector of St. James's Westminster, and Chaplain in Ordinary to Her Majesty. Printed for James Knapton at the Crown in St. Paul's Church-yard. Price 6 s.

This Day is Published,

The Works of Dr. King, in 2 Volumes 8vo. Containing all his Miscellanies in Prose and Verse, his Art of Love, Imitation of Ovid de Arte Amandi, the 2d Edition of his Art of Cookery, in Imitation of Horace Art of Poetry, and all his other Translations exceeding those of the Royal Society, Illustrated with Copper Plates. Price bound 12 s. Printed for Bernard Lintott at the Cross Keys between the two Temple-Gates in Fleet-street, of whom may be had Madam Dacier's Horace in English, and his Miscellanies of Poems.

Lately Publish'd,

Peace at Home and Peace Abroad; to which is added a Preface, in Answer to a Preface of a Right Reverend Author lately to his Four Sermons, Also Meditations and Prayers to be used before, at and after the Receiving the Holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Both Printed for Thomas Harbin at the Bible and Anchor in the New Exchange in the Strand.

On Saturday next will be Publish'd,

Theocracy: The Government of the Indies, applied to the Revolution in 1688. In a Sermon Preached in Fenchurch Lane, Nov. 6 1711. By Thomas Bradbury. Printed for N. Cliff and D. Jackson, at the Bible and 3 Crowns in Cheapside. Price

The Houshold Goods and Lining belonging to John Kellam Esq; Deceas'd, to be Sold by Auction, at his House in Bond-street St. James's, on Thursday the 26th of this Instant June by Order of his Executors, the Goods to be seen on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday before the Sale.

For SALE by the CANDLE.

This Day the 19th Instant, at Lloyd's Coffee-House in Lombard street, at 4 in the Afternoon, (only one Hogshead a Lot) viz. 100 Hhds of excellent new French Claret, viz. Margou, Obrion, and others of the best Growths of France, deep, bright, high, fresh and of the true Flavour, neat, and not one Hhd sold but imported by Messieurs Tarton and Guigner, by a Swedish Ship the Crown'd Mary, being the second such Ship arrived from Bourdeaux directly; now in a Vault under Clothworker's-Hall in Mincing-Lane between Fenchurch-street and Tower-street. To be seen and tasted this Day till the time of Sale. Note, the Buyers are desired to appear punctually at the Hour appointed, the Sale being to be compleated without adjourning. To be sold by Tho. Tomkins, Broker in Sterling-Lane in Tower-street.

LONDON: Printed for *Sam. Buckley*, at the *Dolphin* in *Little-Britain*; and Sold by *A. Baldwin* in *Warwick-Lane*; where Advertisements are taken in; as also by *Charles Lillie*, Perfumer, at the Corner of *Beauford-Buildings* in the *Strand*.